

## WORLD RELIGIONS

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 12	13 - 24	25 - 38	39 - 48	49 - 57	58 - 67	68 - 100

### Standard level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 30

### General comments

This is my first year as chief examiner and I had to learn the processes of the IB examination process without prior preparation or induction, but this was assisted by the efficiency of the administration and robust systems. The delivery of materials was generally on time and the instructions to the chief examiner were transparent. The examination meeting went well and the processes of dealing with improved student performance were robust, although, in my opinion, rather too dependent on averages thrown up by statistical information, than the individuality of cohorts, fluctuating from year to year, and improved student performance based on teacher improvement in dealing with the syllabus of the pilot. In addition, more awareness needs to be made of actual numbers in small cohorts and the degree to which these impact on statistics in such cases. There was considerable positive evidence that candidates were beginning to grasp the harder aspects of the course, such as those exhibited on paper 2 or in the IA. The IB is to be congratulated on the skills assessed in the IA as I would consider that the content of this paper actually prepares students for the approach used in the study of religion at university. Increasingly academics are finding that the approach to teaching 'A' Level in a results driven culture is not preparing students adequately for university level study with its emphasis on independent learning. The IA provides an ideal bridge or transition from school to university.

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range and suitability of the work submitted was very good and it was clear that students were highly engaged and excited by the prospect of 'owning' their own research and pursuing their own interests. There is a challenge for teachers, in that students may pursue topics in which teachers have little knowledge base or where resources are scarce or difficult to assess. It is also an issue that, in many countries, religion is not taught as an academic

discipline and teachers may not be trained or qualified in the discipline. Where teachers are seriously challenged in their ability to deal with a project or where they are aware that resources are scarce, they need to advise students to be cautious in their choice of research question. Advice needs to be given when students offer research questions that are too broad to be tackled within the constraints of the assignment. As a basic guideline research topics should be in the form of a question to keep the students focused. It is also important that students are aware of the subjective nature of most online material on religion. They need to evaluate sources, with a balance between empirical research (interviews with informants, web searches, visits, books and periodicals) and secondary scholarly reading and highlighting differences of the findings from the various sources. This is an essential part of the teaching process.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

The IA mean grade was up from 5.53 in 2011 to 6.03 this year. There was also a large increase in the number of grade sevens awarded. To some degree this reflected the ability of certain schools to engage with the project. For example, the titles selected by the students indicated a high level of engagement with the project, but also a high level of knowledge and understanding of the kind of questions that form research in the study of religion.

Some of the questions composed by the more able students were those expected of second and third year undergraduates. However, in one school, there were clearly able students, whose marks I had to adjust, who had not been given clear direction on the process of the project. These students had written standard essays to self-devised questions. It is absolutely imperative that teachers give clear guidance on the stages of the project and what is required at each stage. There is no reason why this should not be checked by teachers as part of the process of teaching to the project's requirements.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 – 50

### General overview

Once again, candidates performed well on this paper and this reflected the good cohort this year. Opportunities for conceptual awareness on part (a) of this paper are limited and can be developed in part (b). In general students dealt well this in part (b) which does allow for some of these skills to be displayed. Some candidates do not answer the question set but provide general information on the religion and this would suggest a method of revision that relies too heavily on memorization rather than applying knowledge to problem solving. This applies most obviously to part (b). As noted in last year's report there was, sometimes, a tendency to repeat information given in part (a) again in part (b) suggesting that some candidates have

not thought through how to relate part (a) and part (b) to one another. The Part (a) question is based on a short scriptural quotation. The secret of a successful part (a) question is to provide the students with a short passage from which it must be possible to pick out three discernible points. Seemingly vague quotations can create a slightly harder paper for weaker students. This was particularly the case for Islam and Judaism on this year's papers. I noted that markers had adjusted themselves to be flexible to deal with the vagueness of the quotes. Surprisingly questions pertaining to more unfamiliar religions (Bahai, Jainism, Taoism) were dealt with better than Christianity, for example. Weaker students clearly approached the more obscure religions by learning a series of facts that could be reproduced as seven points, whereas they tried to deal with the Christian question through their own 'insider' understandings of the religion. Those that practice a religion need to be warned about the differences between **confessional** and **academic** approaches to the study of religion.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 23	24 - 27	28 - 40

### General overview

It was in this paper that students performed much better than in May 2011. The marked shift led to a review of the results, especially focusing at the 6/7 boundary. The evidence from the scripts sampled and a comparison with boundary marker samples from the previous years was clear. Although there was twice the number of grade sevens as awarded in 2011 on this paper, albeit from a small cohort, this was commensurate with an overall improvement across all papers marked. It was noted that the schools in the pilot programme were beginning to come to terms with the skills required for this paper. The main challenges for the less successful students remain that they answer providing information and description rather than basing the answer on conceptual awareness and analysis. Scripts from some schools still indicate that students were memorizing information provided by the teacher, too closely dependent on the guidance notes, resulting in similar answers. In the worst cases this resulted in students memorizing facts but failing to remember which religion the facts belonged to. This indicates 'shallow learning' reflective of both teaching and learning cultures. Some students need to resolve a value-laden approach to religion and avoid discussions around truth claims or positions from truth both inter- and intra-religion. As in Paper 1 students need to be warned of the pitfalls of answering the question on their own faith persuasion from their own belief position.